

May 12, 2016

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90

Dear Chairman Wheeler and Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai, and O'Rielly:

We are the Fire Chief and Mayor of Grand Tower, Illinois, and we are writing you to emphasize the importance of continuing to fund voices services for the most rural parts of our state. Illinois, like many states, has some very rural and remote areas with challenging terrains. Landline voice services remain the primary method of communications for these areas and remain vital for emergency services, particularly before, during, and after extreme weather events.

In all of these extreme weather events,¹ landline telephone service is critical for emergency services, and it was vital to restore communications as quickly as possible if they were knocked out. Restoring landline service is especially important in these very rural areas because there is frequently no wireless service, and our residents rely on telephone as the primary link to emergency services. First responders rely on maintaining that connection during emergencies and ensuring that communications are restored as quickly as possible if a weather event takes down communications.

Telephone service in remote areas is also particularly important due to reverse 911. Reverse 911 (also called emergency telephone notification) allows first responders to call residents in advance of and during natural disasters to give an early warning and communicate updates. For example, reverse 911 is especially useful with notifications during forest fires because it enables emergency responders to nearly instantaneously warn residents to evacuate if they may be in the path of a fire, which can change direction at a moment's notice.

Landline voice service remains too important of a service to emergency responders in rural and remote locations to put at risk through a failure to provide adequate funding. Accordingly, we would urge the Commission to take into account the importance of emergency services, including 911 and reverse 911, in ensuring that Illinois's most rural residents can continue to access voice services.

¹ Please see the attached for recent photos of flooding in Grand Tower.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Ellett SR.
MAYOR OF GRAND TOWER

DENNIS WRIGHT
Dennis Wright
FIRE CHIEF
GRAND TOWER



